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to the King of Spain, and one of Mr. Jay to the Count Florida Blanca, are given twice in the sixth volume. The editorship of the seventh volume is decidedly superior to that of most of its predecessors.

These imperfections are blemishes in the work ; but its substantial value, as a repository of important historical documents, remains unimpaired. It completes the series of publications made at the public expense, in pursuance of the joint Resolution of March 27th, 1818. The preceding works, published under the same Resolution, are the Journal of the Convention which formed the Constitution, the Secret Journal of the old Congress for foreign affairs, their Secret Domestic Journal ; and the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution. The papers remaining in the archives of State yet unpublished, from this important period of our history, will find a place in the work of Messrs. Clarke and Force, just commencing under the auspices of Congress ; and those of the period since the adoption of the Constitution are contained in the great collection of Messrs. Gales and Seaton. Of this important and valuable work seven volumes in folio have already appeared, and to these, and the volumes which may succeed them in the same publication, we may perhaps, on a future occasion, invite the attention of our readers.

ART. III.—*The Italian Drama.*

Tragedie di Alessandro Manzoni, Milanese, Il Conte di Carmagnola e l'Adelchi, aggiuntevi le poesie varie dello stesso, ed alcune prose sulla Teorica del Dramma tragico. Parigi. 1826.

Tragedies by Alexander Manzoni of Milan, entitled, The Count of Carmagnola and the Adelchi: to which are added miscellaneous poems, and some remarks on the theory of the tragic drama by the same author.

THE Moderns have separated the useful from the beautiful, and have placed in the class of superfluities many of those enjoyments, which the wisest amongst the ancients considered as essential to the well-being and happiness of mankind. Little of the poetry of life remains to us. The wells in the

desert are unheeded, or dried up. The traveller in his progress may hear the sound of the harp and the viol, but they no longer accompany him to cheer his journey. We are invited, like Hercules, to choose between virtue and pleasure, as if they were incompatible, and all which cannot be proved necessary is considered as useless and cumbersome, as were the pomps and pageantries which accompanied the march of the Persian Darius. Yet the roses still bloom in our valleys, and the wild-flower wastes its fragrance on the barren moor; and no one is tempted to marvel at the lavish prodigality of nature, which has thus thrown a charm over the most dreary scene.

Is it that the mind of man has become more truly elevated, so that he justly regards with scorn the puerilities which enchanted his forefathers, or is it that the arts themselves have been degraded from their high places, and employed for purposes less exalted, less noble and refined? that the cups of the Temple have been used in profane sacrifices?

Among the ancient Greeks, music, poetry and dancing, formed a part of religion, were employed with a moral and political view,—were studied by sages, and inculcated by legislators. Tragic authors sacrificed on the tomb of Æschylus. Poets appeared in public, a lyre in their hand, and crowned with laurel, the objects of superstitious veneration. The Athenian child received his first instructions in verse, performed his first movement to the sound of music, and was surrounded from infancy by the most beautiful productions of sculpture. At the theatre, he received an impression of all the arts combined in one brilliant and harmonious whole. There, the splendid choruses, that superb blending of poetry and music,—the dresses and dances, in strict unison with the gravity and sublimity of the subject,—the mighty multitude, breathless with admiration, or transported with enthusiasm, or shuddering with horror, as the virtues, or the sufferings, or the glorious deeds of their godlike heroes were successively represented before them, must have produced an effect, in comparison with which that of any modern drama is necessarily feeble.

In the time of Aristotle, the author and the people, to whom the Greeks were indebted for the invention of Tragedy, were unknown. But all the religious ceremonies of Paganism were of a dramatic nature. At the festivals, held in honor of the gods and their immortal progeny, their different adventures were represented by dances, and verses accompanied with

music. The sorrows and maternal anxiety of Ceres, when she wandered through the world in search of her daughter,—the grief of Venus for the loss of Adonis,—her joy at his restoration to life,—but above all, the adventures of the joyous god of wine,—his victories,—his descent into hell,—formed inexhaustible themes for representation. The wild Bacchante, and the attendant train of fauns and satyrs, in their grotesque and hideous grouping, were well fitted for scenic effect. The poets were divided into two classes,—those who sang the praises of the gods,—and those who indulged in raillery at the follies of men. Hence the distinction between heroic and iambic verse; while the heroic poets were again divided into epic, sententious, and lyric.

The epic poem shadows forth the past,—the dramatic poem brings us face to face with grey antiquity. ‘The Homeric epic,’ says Schlegel, ‘is, in poetry, what half-raised workmanship is in sculpture, and tragedy the distinctly separated group.’ Homer may be justly regarded as the Father of Tragedy. His poem was like the fabled Pactolus, throwing on the shore its golden treasures, to be collected in precious heaps by passing generations.

Tragedy, in its origin, was a sacred hymn, sung and danced in honor of Bacchus;—so that Epigenes, having brought forward a Tragedy, of which the subject bore no relation to that god, the astonished spectators exclaimed—‘There is nothing there which concerns Bacchus!’ A remark which afterwards passed into a proverb, applicable to those who treated of any matter foreign to the proposed question. The scene was at the entry of a Temple or Palace, or in the midst of some public place. It passed between the first persons of the state, and was of a nature to interest the whole body of the people. These were represented by the Chorus, composed, as in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, of the wisest and oldest men of the state. As they never left the stage, unity of place was necessary to probability.

Thespis being forbidden by Solon to represent his pieces in Athens, or, as the legislator expressed it, ‘to tell falsehoods before so many honest men,’—he and his *troupe* traversed the country in a chariot, after the fashion of modern strolling companies, their travelling equipage serving them for a stage. Then Phrynicus, the pupil of Thespis, first introduced female characters, and in his day, notwithstanding the rude state of

the Drama, no expense was spared in embellishing it. Judges were established to examine into the merits of the new pieces, and the most deserving *obtained the Chorus*. To understand this expression, we must recollect that the Athenians were divided into ten tribes, each having a Magistrate, called *Chorégus*, at whose expense the theatrical entertainment was given. When he had chosen a piece, he granted it the Chorus, that is, he furnished the Poet with actors, dancers, dresses, and decorations, and endeavored by his magnificence and generosity to surpass his rivals. Of this honor, the Magistrate was as jealous as of a victory gained over the enemies of the republic. Thus Themistocles, having, as Chorégus, displayed an extraordinary degree of splendor, caused a monument to be erected with this inscription ;—‘Themistocles was Chorégus—Phrynicus had the piece represented—Adimantes presided.’

Æschylus found the drama in its infancy, and yet may be considered as its creator, as Greece herself, though truly the cradle of the arts, is regarded as their birth-place. He rendered it more dignified and serious,—erected a theatre of uncommon magnificence,—invented machinery and decorations of a novel description,—ornamented the scene with paintings, statues, altars, and tombs,—introduced pale shades, and furies with hissing locks,—the noise of trumpets, the sound of thunder. So dignified were the dresses which he gave to the priests, that afterwards, in all solemn fasts and religious ceremonies, the sacerdotal order wore no other. Since the Theatre thus regulated the Temple, we may easily perceive the difference which existed between the opinion of the ancients and that of the moderns, in regard to the Drama. Æschylus himself composed the music and dances. His was the reign of Terror ; when the fearful chorus of the Eumenides so appalled the spectators, that the magistrates were obliged to order a diminution of their number. The heroes of Æschylus were demigods, devoted to their country, insatiable of glory, and expressing themselves in language proportionably elevated. They were moral giants, borne down by the gloomy power of Fate, like the ancient Titans overwhelmed by the weight of their own mountains. They were beings to admire, but not to sympathize with. It seemed as if, proud of his glorious nation, he wished, with a nobler ambition than that of Alexander in a succeeding age, to represent the men of his period to future generations, as beings whose moral

stature was more than human. Love was never described by him, either in its tenderness or its frenzy. He considered it as a weakness or a crime ; and, as either, unworthy of his tragic pencil.

Sophocles made Tragedy descend from this unnatural elevation. He described men, not as they are, but as he wished them to be ;—more noble in mind, more beautiful in person, than they are to be met with in real life. Perhaps he found their model in himself ; for no poet of antiquity is represented to us as endowed with so many divine gifts as Sophocles. Equally celebrated for the graces of his person, as for his valor, genius and piety, he was the object, during a long and happy life, of the love and admiration of his fellow-citizens, and, after a tranquil death, of their gratitude and reverence. His style was magnificent, noble, and flowing. He was equally sublime, but less terrible than his tragic predecessor,—equally bold in conception, but more prudent in execution,—one of equal power, but milder sway.

Euripides portrayed his heroes, not as they ought to be, but as they too frequently are. His aim was to please, by whatever means. Ingenious, graceful and amiable, his mind, like an undulating landscape, seemed to possess every variety of elevation and plane,—now noble, now common-place. He took pleasure in describing the faults and failings of heroes, and in laying open their imperfections ; not only holding the mirror up to nature, but the microscope to deformity. If the heroes of Sophocles discourage the virtuous, those of Euripides are too apt to console the vicious.

Still, the brilliant and wonderful powers of Euripides have permitted him to take his place as one of the three Fathers of Tragedy. Under these great masters, Tragedy, from its simple and rude beginnings, suddenly attained an elevation which has never been surpassed in ancient or modern times ; and so long as, adhering to Grecian rules, without regard to the difference of language, manners, or feelings,—the poets of modern days have consented to fetter their imagination with arbitrary restrictions, their works have at best deserved the applause due to successful copies,—while the noble originals, with all the merit of invention, and with the sacred halo of antiquity thrown around them, must forever appear in all the proud majesty of champions, who vainly challenge their degenerate rivals to surpass them, and mock at their feeble efforts. We

cannot vanquish them with their own arms ; but there may be other weapons, better suited to modern strength. The Greek fire is no longer in use ; but a modern invention is yet more effective and terrible.

Yet it is pleasing thus to view the lofty stability of true greatness ;—to see that after a lapse of ages,—notwithstanding the caprices of fashion, and the revolution of empires, there is yet a splendor in genius which no cloud may extinguish or obscure. It is a proud evidence of the dominion of mind over matter. The sceptre of Alexander is broken,—the empire of Sophocles is yet undisputed. The poet and the philosopher sought for truth, and their fame, like their object, is stamped with the seal of immortality. Like the first settlers in an unknown country, the world was all before them where to choose,—and that world was *Greece*. Surrounded by living models of beauty and grace, their climate, their religion, their sky,—all was harmony. Their religion only taught them to aspire to a continuation of these outward blessings. They but imagined forms of more divine beauty, groves yet more fragrant, melody more perfect than their own. ‘The poetry of the ancients,’ as is well remarked by a German critic, ‘is the poetry of enjoyment, and ours is that of desire ; the former has its foundation in the scene which is present, while the latter hovers between recollection and hope.’

Without an antecedent literature, no charges of plagiarism could be brought against them. It was reserved for the modern antiquary to make the accusation. The fear of criticism was not before them, or perhaps they had a prouder consciousness of their own powers than the poets of the present day. The Athenians also were prodigiously sensible to the charms of eloquence, passing at a word from rage to pity, from violence to repentance. The passions and feelings of the multitude were the wires by which superior spirits ruled them ; and whilst modern eloquence aspires rather at convincing the understanding than at captivating the feelings, the ancient orators and dramatists aimed at producing a sudden and vehement impression, and at awakening all that was noble and generous in Grecian nature. The great difficulty which the modern imitators of Grecian art have encountered, has been in discovering how far this imitation ought to extend, and how far it was suitable to the age and nation in which they lived and wrote ;—how much of the effect produced on the Athenian

stage was due to the character of the people, how much to the nature of their religion ; and in what degree these beautiful productions, while they serve as models in the purity of taste and simplicity of plan which distinguished them, ought to be deviated from, when a strict adherence to their rules is found to impose trammels upon genius,—clipping the wings of the eagle, and bidding it soar to the skies.

The true object of the Drama is public instruction. Our sentiments ought to be more noble, our minds more pure and elevated, on leaving than on entering the theatre. On the Grecian stage, the most august and sacred ceremonies were united with the most noble maxims of pagan morality. The theatre was a school of virtue, and continued to be so during the free ages of the republic. The Drama flourished under the protection of religion, and the fine arts were employed in those noble purposes, for which heaven has no doubt designed them.

The Chorus gave a splendor and variety to Tragedy,—rendered it more regular, and yet more brilliant. The part of a confidant in our modern dramas is stiff and unnatural,—a monologue is tedious and improbable,—and moral reflections, introduced by the different characters, are seldom suited to the part which they represent, and are apt to destroy the illusion. These disadvantages the ancient Chorus remedied. It announced in lofty strains the arrival of the illustrious personages ; it blamed, approved, deplored, advised, and always took an active part with one or other of the principal characters. In modern tragedy, the different acts form so many separate pieces, played at intervals, the orchestra during these intervals performing music, which has probably no connexion with the subject. The imagination of the spectator grows cold,—his thoughts return to the ordinary affairs of life,—the chain of feeling, thus broken, is with difficulty renewed,—and the scene becomes divested of its enchantment. It has been supposed that the ancient tragedies were sung from beginning to end ; the dialogue answering to the recitative, and the choral songs to the air of our modern operas. Yet the difference between the simplicity of a Grecian tragedy, and the fairy-like brilliancy of an Italian opera, must amount to the most perfect contrast. The music was grave, and devoid of ornament,—the dances were suitable to the subject,—but this union of the arts must have produced a constant variety, and offered a bril-

liant succession of new pleasures, occupying, but without fatigue, the mind of the spectator with the one subject represented. Much has been said as to the inconsistency of music and dancing, in connexion with the performance of tragic action; but this is an objection which could not have occurred to the ancients, who were accustomed to consider both in unison with the most sacred and lofty subjects. 'It is,' says an ancient author, 'an act of piety, and one of the principal duties of men to sing the praises of the gods, who, by a signal instance of favor, have granted the use of articulate speech to them alone.' Apollo was the inventor of music. The first of the Grecian chiefs sang to his harp

‘The immortal deeds of heroes and of gods.’

As to the objection founded on improbability, so neither do persons in real life speak in verse, nor is it always in the imitative arts the closest copy of nature which pleases us best. A statue of marble enchants us,—a wax figure, so much nearer life, produces a sensation of fear and dislike.

The modern Opera enchants the senses, but fails to gratify the mind. The poetry is a mere accessory, lost in the profuseness and brilliancy of the music, costumes and dancing. The modernized Grecian Tragedy may affect our feelings, but the absence of music, dancing and decoration must render its power over the imagination comparatively feeble. Why may not some master-hand re-unite these enjoyments, and thus gratify at once the understanding and the senses, ennobling the latter, enlivening the former? Why have the moderns, in their imitation of Grecian art, adhered so tenaciously to the rules, and yet retrenched so many of the beauties,—obeyed the letter, and neglected the spirit of the law? Why not preserve the general idea of all that is great and beautiful which they have bequeathed to us, without fettering themselves with imaginary rules, founded on obscure and disputed passages of antiquity? Yet in other respects, saving only in the system of the unities, so long a watch-word for argument throughout Europe, the ancient rules have been violated without scruple. The theatres of the Greeks were on a scale of colossal grandeur,—their actors were masked, and were elevated on the cothurnus. All this has been deviated from. Again,—their theatres were open above; and the gods and heroes addressed themselves to the real heaven. This also is changed, as suits

a colder latitude. When Electra, turning to the sun, addressed the orb of light, then rising in cloudless majesty in a Grecian sky,—‘ Oh holy light, and thou air, which fillest the expanse between earth and heaven ! ’—the effect was no doubt sublime ; but if a modern Electra thus addressed a shivering audience in our less genial clime, while clouds were driving over the disk of ‘ Phœbus Apollo,’ and a blast of wind and rain was blowing aside her dishevelled tresses, the tragic effect would certainly flow from a different source.

The trifling peculiarities of genius seldom fail of imitators. A few quaint oaths and obsolete phrases, and the writer believes he has infused into his drama the very spirit of Shakspeare. Even the defects of a great author are dwelt on with peculiar complacency by the injudicious critic. It is the modern courtier of an Alexander, recommending the imitation of his monarch’s personal deformity, and declaring that in it consists the chief grace of the hero. But the sun is bright in spite of the spots that obscure its disk,—not on account of them. The religious observance of certain arbitrary rules is always advantageous to mediocrity both in the author and in the critic. When the unities have been strictly observed through five acts, and the critic, with his watch in hand, has seen the hero expire and the curtain drop precisely at the appointed hour, he is satisfied that the drama is strictly classical, and that he runs no risk in giving it a certain portion of applause.

The splendid mythology of the ancients furnished their dramatists with one inexhaustible source of power over the feelings of the audience,—with one unfailing spring by which to arouse the deepest emotions of the heart,—pity, terror or anguish. The terrible Furies,—the gigantic Titans,—the fated house of Atreus,—the gods themselves on their eternal Olympus,—the whole is now but a mere display of poetic and classical imagery,—brilliant indeed, but incapable of awakening a deeper sentiment than admiration, in a modern breast. Yet there are advantages possessed by the moderns, of which genius has powerfully availed itself, when, overcoming imaginary barriers, it has dared to choose its own path. Ancient Tragedy was the representation of one great passion. The gloom of Fate hung over their characters,—of dark, unalterable Destiny. Love was a species of frenzy, commanded by the gods, and sent as a punishment to the unhappy mortal who

was afflicted by it. Owing to their restriction from female intercourse, the more delicate shades of character were unknown to them. One princess may generally serve as a model for the whole. Iphigenia, Antigone, Polyxena, were the same characters, placed in different circumstances. A Juliet or a Desdemona could not have been imagined, or, if imagined, understood. Medea in revenge resembles Lady Macbeth in ambition,—the innocent eyes of her children were to her, what the smile of Duncan was to the modern heroine. But Love, in its refinement and purity, was a stranger to the Grecian stage.

In the simple majesty of a statue, in which one great passion alone can be expressed, where shall we venture to hope for a rival to the ancient masters? The human heart beats as warmly,—its depths of anguish, of vengeance, of fury, were as well understood three thousand years ago as now; but the Grecian artist, striving to delineate something even more divine than the Grecian form,—something which should embody Divinity,—now in its awful unity too far removed above mortal comprehension for mortal pencil to delineate;—imparted to his glorious works an ideal grace, which no modern imagination can equal.

The Greeks inherited the dramatic art from no other nation,—they borrowed from no other people,—and their originality was the sign of their power, and the cause of their success. The difference of language between nations is not greater than the difference in spirit. One people is powerfully affected by that with which another has no sympathy. While the strong link of human feeling unites all men, the barrier of national peculiarities effectually separates them. The Romans hold but an indifferent rank as tragedians, and are scarcely known in that department but as translators or imitators of the Greeks. Concerning the tragic authors of the Augustan age, little is known, and the few of their works which have descended to us, give little reason to regret the loss of the remainder. The Roman character was not liable to be affected by tragic emotion. Life was too real,—too abundant in stirring and mighty enterprise, to permit the mind to be captivated by poetic visions. In the days of Roman virtue, the people might admire the spectacle of a hero preferring death to freedom, or with the noble vanity of a Curtius, believing no sacrifice more acceptable to the gods than that of a patriot. In the age of their degeneracy, when, like giants drunk with wine,

they reeled under the weight of their own glory, they could imagine no higher virtue than the stoical indifference which meets death with contempt, when the cup of pleasure is quaffed. Their reigning monsters were types of the one head with which Nero wished the Roman people endowed. Each was in himself a concentration of the extravagant pride with which their position inspired the whole body,—of the insane contempt with which the Empress of the World looked down upon her contemporaries,—of the furious thirst for pleasure, which found no satisfaction in exhausting all that the tributary world could offer of luxury or enjoyment, humanly so considered,—but which, when their eyes were satiated with pomp, and their spirits oppressed with splendor, yet found a demoniac satisfaction in cruelty and bloodshed. Their own history was their tragedy. They beheld the monarchs of the world dragging their chains after the victorious Consul. What fabulous representation could equal such living woe? As for crimes,—emblems of crime were seated on the throne,—tragedies more bloody were daily enacted, than the wildest imagination could have shadowed forth. What effect could tragic pathos have on their steeled nerves? They loved pomp,—pageantry,—triumphs;—where the standards and the pillage of other nations bore witness to the greatness of the Roman name. No mock processions, or farciful pageants these. The pleasures of sight delighted them more than those of sound. In the midst of a tragic performance, the Roman people, with a voice like the roaring of the ocean-waves, would order the actors to stop, and shout for the bears and gladiators.

With the Greek triumvirate the ancient Drama rose, and with them it sunk, as if exhausted. And then the sleep of the middle ages fell over the world, enlivened by romantic dreams of chivalry,—of stately barons and noble dames, and cowed monks,—of knights and tournaments,—of love, pomp and courtesy. When mankind awoke from the slumber of ages, they thirsted for classic lore; but some nations were imbued with this chivalrous spirit, and their works bear its impress,—with others, it seemed as if the slumber had been more intense, and that their imagination, which had received no visions of a stirring or novel nature, reverted to the fables of mythology, and sought for inspiration at Grecian fountains alone.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for one nation to judge

impartially of the literature, and especially of the poetry of another; and eternal gratitude is due to those candid and learned critics, who, divesting themselves of national prejudice, have devoted their time and talents to an investigation of the respective merits of the various candidates,—have acted as interpreters and mediators between the literati of different nations,—have done justice to talent, of whatever country it is a native; and, judging each performance by its own laws, have bowed before genius, though flourishing on a foreign soil.

The English and Spaniards, both possessing a rich dramatic literature, have in that department no connexion with the Italians or French. The theatre of the former is entirely independent of that of the latter, in its formation and in its history. In vain have critics condemned their dramatic productions as irregular; the works of a Shakspeare or a Calderon will be appreciated wherever they are understood. The English and French here stand at opposite barriers. The one, looking on Tragedy as a poem, formed on a certain plan, reduced to a certain period of time, space, and action, could see no beauty where they imagined that taste was set at defiance. The English, justly regarding Shakspeare as their national glory, and the pride of their literature, ridiculed in their turn the regularity of the French drama, which appeared to them wholly destitute of plot, variety of character, incident, or interest. They cherished even the faults of their great luminary, and blinded by the magic splendor of his genius, ranked them with his merits.

The old English dramatists must be judged by their own laws, and when we consider the splendor of the Drama from the middle of Elizabeth's reign to the end of James's,—the rich dialogue, the magic creations of fancy,—the irregular but striking plot,—the rapid succession of characters which distinguished the works of those master-spirits; and compare the inferiority of the succeeding writers, who endeavored to decry the merits of Shakspeare, and to substitute their formal and elaborate imitations of French tragedy for these glowing and breathing works; we cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that the language, the tastes, the feelings of the English nation are too opposite to those of the ancient Grecians, to render any parallel between them possible, or any effort to render the one theatre a model for the other, desirable.

In the rich creations of the Spanish Drama, the authors

seem to have been inspired by the very spirit of chivalry. It is founded upon the most elevated principles of honor, love, valor and devotional feeling. As the ancients understood tragedy, the dramatic works both of the Spaniards and English ought rather to be considered as romantic dramas, than as tragedies, according to the strict definition.

The French have indeed combated well, and not always unsuccessfully, with the difficulties which they have imposed upon themselves in their strict adherence to Grecian rules, and their employment of Grecian materials. They have even on some occasions improved upon their models, as in others they have necessarily fallen very far beneath them. In judging them before their own tribunal, the manifold disadvantages under which they have labored ought not to be forgotten. We ought to remember the inferior harmony and energy of the French language, as compared with the Grecian,—the different feelings with which a Pagan and a Christian audience must regard the manifest interposition of the gods, the first filled with faith and terror, the latter regarding the whole mythological system as false and absurd,—the absence of all those brilliant accessories of music and dancing, so blended with their models, and even forming the principal part of the entertainment,—the difference between the Athenian and French character, and the changes which three thousand years have produced in all moral and social institutions,—the limited choice of subjects allowed to the ancients, on account of their strict adherence to the unities, and the difficulty of producing any moral effect, when, instead of gradually unrolling the map of the human mind, and showing with a fearful truth, which comes home to the bosom of every individual spectator, how the slight germs of passion within the human breast may, if unchecked, lead to the most frightful enormities, the author is forced to produce upon the scene beings whose actions must appear unnatural, full-grown monsters, guilty at once of the most atrocious crimes of treason, cruelty, parricide, without those gradual approaches from error to vice, and from vice to the depths of crime, which hold forth so striking a lesson in the dramas of the English bard.

French tragedies are written in verse, but evidently not so as to be sung. The French language cannot, like the Grecian, admit of the transposition or retrenchment of the syllables ;

nor has it the elegance of the Attic, the luxurious softness of the Ionian, or the vigor of the Doric dialect.

Subjects, drawn from the ancient history of Greece, and filled with allusions to the actual state of the republic, must of necessity be regarded by us with a very lukewarm degree of interest. In describing the misfortunes of Andromache, the Greek poet represented to his audience the misfortunes of their own country. The French dramatist has thus been forced to choose subjects of which love is the ruling passion,—one, which must come home to the feelings of men of all ages and nations. This he has treated in a different and superior manner,—with greater delicacy and a more intimate knowledge of the human heart, and above all, of female character, nearly a *terra incognita* to the Athenian poet.

No subject was fitted to produce a more powerful dramatic effect, than the sacrifice of Iphigenia. No interest could be stronger than that produced by the anguish of a king and a father, who, in consequence of a divine mandate, divests himself of all personal feeling, and immolates the being dearest to him on earth,—and of a virtuous princess, who, in the flower of youth, and with every prospect of a brilliant and happy life, is called upon to submit to the most cruel destiny. The heroine of Racine is as much superior to the Iphigenia of Euripides in loftiness of character and delicacy of sentiment, as the Christian maiden ought to be over the Pagan princess. But the names of Achilles and Agamemnon were, to the Greeks, those of national heroes. The siege of Troy was the foundation of the Grecian name and the Grecian glory,—and it was necessary that Racine should treat the subject with infinitely more art, in order to produce by different means an equal degree of interest in his hearers.

The French have compared Corneille to Sophocles, and Racine to Euripides,—but if we consider the disorder and chaos in which Corneille found the French drama, and the splendor to which he raised it, we must rather grant him the title of the French Æschylus. Corneille created the taste of the age in which he wrote. Racine has served as a model to all succeeding French writers. The one suddenly appeared after a long night of darkness;—the other shone brightly in the most enlightened age. Yet, in the perfect regularity and elegance of Racine, and in the impetuous and magnificent declamation of Corneille, something is always wanting to sat-

isfy the mind. To one accustomed to the rich imagination of Shakspeare, there is a coldness, a want of strength and passion in these great writers, the cause of which may, no doubt, be traced, in a great measure, to the severity of the system which they have compelled themselves to adopt. They are beautiful poems; but it would seem that poetry, without the sister arts, is insufficient to gratify us on the stage.

Genius will conquer all difficulties; and Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire, working in their shackles, (from which the last however made some endeavors to extricate himself,) have proved the miraculous power of talent, not the wisdom of the system which thus enthralled it. It was in the hands of lesser men, that its weakness became apparent;—of those inferior followers and adulators, who ceased not to maintain that the *nec plus ultra* had been reached, and that all efforts to produce more striking effects must prove abortive.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, there were few dramatic writers in Germany, worthy of notice. The appearance of Goethe's *Goetz of Berlichingen* threw a gleam of light over their dramatic horizon, and proved to German authors that there were principles yet more important, in dramatic composition, than an adherence to the unities. The study of Shakspeare, which probably had its influence on Goethe's mind in effecting this revolution, led to the conviction that something less pompous and more true to nature might be effected, by abandoning the servile imitation of the French drama,—by ceasing to be the copyists of a copy. Lessing set the example of writing tragedies in connexion with ordinary life: but he also wrote them in prose. Twenty years afterwards, Schiller decided that blank verse was the best medium for dramatic composition. As in all revolutions, men pass from one extreme to another, the most violent contrast imaginable to the French school was naturally produced. 'In truth,' says a German author, (Klinger, the learned friend of Goethe,) 'the wild struggles for which we have been censured, were but endeavors to find out a mode of composition suitable to us.' There is now no country in the world, which can produce such an array of great names in the dramatic department, and none where the theatres have been more flourishing of late years, than in Germany.

There is a country where the poetry of life yet lingers,—which resembles Greece in its beauties of nature and art;—

where the character of the people resembles that of the ancient Greeks, in their keen perception of the beautiful, in their innate taste for the arts,—in their impetuosity of feeling,—in their lively and brilliant imagination,—in their passions, rapidly excited and as rapidly stifled. In vain a succession of despots have endeavored to crush the national spirit. It burns like their own volcanoes, in slumbering but not smothered flame. There the splendid forms may yet be seen, which inspired the masters of the golden time. The peasantry yet weave garlands of flowers, and, dwelling amidst the glorious ruins of the arts, insensibly imbibe a taste for the classic and the beautiful. Rich in hope, richer, alas ! in recollection, history furnishes them with facts of stirring and national interest, offering to the dramatic writer inexhaustible sources of tragic emotion. The language also is, like that of the Greeks, a succession of harmonious sounds, affecting even those who are ignorant of its meaning, like a strain of rich music ; and capable alike of expressing the most violent emotions or the most tender sentiments of the soul. Yet, while the Opera has so long continued the pride and pleasure of Italy, tragic actors have been scarcely listened to,—and with the exception of a few stars, scarcely a name of note appears in their dramatic annals,—while but few tragedies have been written, worthy of being incorporated into their literature.

Various plausible reasons have been assigned by the learned in their endeavors to account for this singular fact, and more especially it has been contended, that their neglect of national and modern subjects has paralyzed the exertion of dramatic energy, and prevented their authors from rising above a frigid mediocrity. That this reason is insufficient in itself to account for the poverty of the Italian drama, may be inferred from the circumstance, that greater feebleness is to be met with in the works of Pindemonte and others, when their subjects have been of a modern nature, than when they have confined themselves to classical events, and that Alfieri himself has lost much of his energy in his historical dramas. The true secret seems to be, that they have followed where they ought to have led, and have preferred the inglorious safety of servile imitation, to the hazard of opening a new path for themselves.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, appeared the *Sophonisba* of Trissino,—cold, spiritless, and scrupulously formed after the ancient models. To it succeeded the

Rosmunda and the Oreste of Rucellai,—the first founded on Gibbon's well-known tale of horror, and chiefly remarkable for the unmingled atrocity of the characters,—the second, an imitation of the Iphigenia in Taurus of Euripides. Various feeble imitators of the Grecian Triumvirate followed. They endeavored to awaken the departed shades of the Grecian heroes, who arose at their call, cold and spiritless, and unclosing their wearied lips with reluctance. The critical Calsbigi, though devoted to the French School, gives the following account of these tragical productions :

‘Distorted, complicated, improbable plots, misconception of scenic regulations, useless personages, double actions, inconsistency of character, gigantic or childish thoughts, feeble verses, affected phrases, the total absence of harmonious and natural poetry,—all this decked out with ill-timed descriptions and similes, or idle philosophical and political disquisitions; in every scene some silly amour, with all the trite insipidity of commonplace gallantry,—but of tragic strength, of the conflict of passions, of overpowering theatrical catastrophes, not the smallest trace.’

When occasionally they deviated from this track, it was to revel amidst scenes of unmitigated horror. Of this description was the *Torrismondo* of Tasso, only rescued from oblivion by the greatness of the author's name,—the *Acripando* of Decia della Horte, full of heavy declamation and awkward plots, yet enlivened by occasional striking scenes and poetic beauties. Maffei's *Merope*, which appeared in the beginning of the eighteenth century, closed, while it greatly surpassed, this school of Italian Tragedy. Its success was great on its first appearance, but it is now considered rather as a work displaying diligence and care, than as possessing any high dramatic merit.

Metastasio is ranked by Schlegel as a tragic author, because the aim of his musical dramas is usually of a serious nature, and because they partly observe in their external form the rules which are considered as belonging to tragedy. The appearance of Alfieri rescued the Italian drama from the effeminacy, into which the musical languor of the pure and faultless Metastasio had plunged it. The opposition between the character of Alfieri and his writings, has always been regarded as one of the most extraordinary of literary anomalies. Pride and enthusiasm, vehemence and ambition, arrogance and

fastidiousness, were the leading features of his mind. In him, all was passion and uncurbed impulse. His successive tastes and propensities held uncontrolled dominion over him. Music especially had a powerful effect upon his mind ; and, as he informs us in his memoirs, the plots of the greater part of his Tragedies were formed either while listening to music, or a few hours afterwards. His temper was passionate even to fury ;—his discontent and melancholy appear at times to have bordered on insanity. He had a passion for travelling,—for horses,—for music,—for liberty,—for literature,—each, whilst it lasted, carried to the most furious excess. With his abhorrence of tyranny, he loved aristocracy ;—with his professions of republicanism, he despised all plebeians. He hated kings, to whom he was inferior in rank ;—he venerated the patrician order to which he belonged. He abhorred the French nation, on account of the contempt expressed by Voltaire for Italian literature,—a contempt which his fierce spirit never forgave. Especially he detested ‘ their horrible *u*, with their little mouths drawn in as if they were blowing hot soup ! ’

In his tragedies, we should naturally have expected bursts of frenzied passion,—of irregular and vehement eloquence,—of sublime but extravagant sentiments. Instead of this, we find them written in a style of pure and scrupulous correctness,—carefully formed upon the severest rules of the Grecian drama,—simple in their plot,—uniform and grave in their composition,—the characters few,—the style never feeble, nor ignoble,—nor yet bordering upon extravagance. The whole structure of his pieces is grave and massive,—more dignified than French tragedy, but less brilliant,—forming no doubt the finest modern approach to the Greek model, yet infinitely less poetical ; the latter circumstance attributable perhaps to the absence of the choral songs ;—the whole compositions, in their chastened temperance and grave delineation of passion, offering the most striking contrast imaginable to their fiery, capricious, and impatient author.

The appearance of Alfieri’s tragedies was a great era in Italy. The Italians were aroused from their harmonious dreams of languor, and felt a generous sympathy with the author. The love of tragedy and of liberty seemed to arise together in their hearts ; and the theatre, which until then had been a mere scene of love intrigues and servile sentiments, was converted into a school of noble and elevated feeling, of honor and virtue.

The public were astonished by the sudden introduction of master-pieces of a character so totally novel,—whose language was destitute of imagery,—whose music, deprived of all those seductive graces and ornaments to which they had been accustomed, was modelled on a more than Spartan austerity. It is true, that this austerity too frequently degenerates into harshness,—that the language is apt to be broken, unmusical, inflexible,—that the mind has no shades whereon to repose, but becomes fatigued by the monotony of crime and fury,—and that the rigid adherence of the author to the ancient system has involved him in difficulties, which all his genius is insufficient to conceal. Thus, for example, in his *Virginia*, conceiving it necessary to drop the curtain immediately upon the death of the heroine, he leaves the spectator in uncertainty as to the fate of the criminal Appius,—so that an audience, ignorant of the historical fact, might suppose that the innocent victim remained unrevengeed.

In the tragedy of *Saul*, the faults of Alfieri are less apparent, and the splendor of his genius more triumphant, than in any other of his dramatic works. His austerity no longer displeases us, but rather seems well suited to the patriarchal simplicity of the shepherd kings of Israel. An eastern coloring pervades the scene, while the lyrical verses impart a richness and sublimity to the whole, which is very effective. There is also more poetry in the language, and in the principal characters we find more natural and human feeling than in any of his other productions. David, the chosen of God, led by a divine mandate, has quitted the retreat to which the fury of Saul had driven him, and appears alone in Gilboa, at the dawn of day. On one side is the camp of the Hebrews,—on the other, that of the Philistines. Jonathan, who has left the royal tent to offer up his morning prayer, meets his friend, and though unable to distinguish him by the faint light, yet knows him by his noble daring, and salutes him with respectful tenderness, as God's elect, and his own well loved brother. He tells him how the king of Israel is troubled,—that the hand of God is heavy upon him,—that the perfidious Abner, with unrelenting artifice, poisons his mind against the champion of Israel. He tells him of the constant and courageous affection of Michal, of her tender attentions to her father, of her profound love for her husband. While they are yet speaking, Jonathan perceives a form in white, indistinctly gleaming, and

approaching them, and knowing it to be his sister coming to join him in his prayers for Saul, he entreats David to step aside, while he prepares her for the unexpected meeting. The Jewish Princess enters, and in words full of tenderness and sorrow, laments the fate of David, her own sufferings, and her father's cruelty. Jonathan gives her hopes that they may meet again ; and while his words make her hesitate between doubt and joy, David appears, and throws himself into the arms of his wife.

After the first transports of joy are over, it is agreed that David shall conceal himself in a secret cavern, while Michal and Jonathan shall endeavor to reconcile their father to his return. Throughout the whole of this first act, there breathes a spirit of simple and healthful tenderness, in which it were to be wished that the stern Piedmontese had more frequently indulged. Saul and the jealous Abner appear in the second act. The king of Israel speaks the language of a noble but fallen nature. He is old,—disheartened,—he feels that the divine protection is withdrawn from his house, but that his sufferings are merited. His character is nobly conceived, and drawn with a masterly hand. A good and an evil spirit seem to combat within him ; his generous nature sometimes gaining the mastery over his evil genius, but more frequently succumbing beneath it. His bosom is agitated by a storm of contending emotions ; and his mind fiercely receiving each new impression, he threatens,—he punishes,—he raves,—and in the midst of his fury he repents and weeps. He describes his own unhappy condition in a vivid manner, when he exclaims to Abner ;

‘ Fero,

Impaziente, torbido, adirato
 Sempre ; a me stesso incresco ognora, e altrui :
 Bramo in pace far guerra, in guerra pace ;
 Entro ogni nappo, ascoso toso io bevo ;
 Scorgo un nemico in ogni amico ; i molli
 Tappite Assirii, ispidi dumi al fianco
 Mi sono ; angoscia il breve sonno ; i sogni
 ‘ Terror. Che piu ? chi’l crederia ? spavento
 M’è la tromba di guerra ; alto spavento
 E la tromba à Saul. Vedi, se è fatta
 Vedova omai di suo splendor la casa
 Di Saul ; vedi, se omai Dio sta meco.

E tu, tu stesso (ah ! ben lo sai) talora
 A me, qual sei, caldo verace amico
 Guerrier, congiunto, e forte duce, e usbergo
 Di mia gloria tu sembri ; e talor, vile
 Uom menzogner di corte, invidia, astuto
 Nemico, traditore.'

' Impatient, fierce, incensed, and turbulent,
 I am a burthen to myself and others ;
 In peace I wish for war, in war for peace :
 Poison concealed I drink in every cup,
 In every friend I see an enemy ;
 The softest carpets of Assyria seem
 Planted with thorns to my unsolaced limbs ;
 My transient sleep is agonized with fear ;
 Each dream with imaged terrors, that distract me.
 Why should I add to this dark catalogue ?
 Who would believe it ? The sonorous trumpet
 Speaks to my ears in an appalling voice,
 And fills the heart of Saul with deep dismay.
 Thou seest clearly that Saul's tottering house
 Is desolate, bereft of all its splendor ;
 Thou seest that God hath cast me off forever.
 And thou thyself (too well thou know'st the truth)
 Dost sometimes, as thou art, appear to me
 My kinsman, champion, and my real friend,
 The leader of my armies, the support
 Of my renown ; and sometimes dost appear
 The interested minion of a court,
 Hostile, invidious, crafty, and a traitor.' *

Whilst Abner is yet endeavoring to persuade Saul that David is the cause of all his misery, Jonathan and Michal enter, and speak of David as the messenger of God,—the pledge of divine favor to Saul,—the most tender and obedient of his children. Their words move the King to tears, and at this moment David himself appears and falls at the feet of Saul. He relates how, in the cave of Engedi, the life of the slumbering King was in his power, and how he had spared the Lord's Anointed. He shows the border of the royal garment, which he had then severed with his sword from the Monarch's robe. Saul is touched by this instance of his truth. He embraces David ;—once more calls him his son, appoints him

* Lloyd's Translation of Alfieri.

to the command of his armies, and desires his daughter to repair his errors by her tenderness.

In the third act, Abner comes to inform the young commander of the order in which he had intended to dispose the troops, and his disappointment and jealousy break forth in the bitter irony of his words. With a noble modesty, David praises the valor of Abner, and approves of his disposition of the forces. But scarcely has Abner left him, when Michal hastens to inform David that he has again infused suspicion into the mind of Saul,—that to avoid the King's wrath, flight will again be necessary, but that she will share his exile. While they are yet speaking, Saul, accompanied by Jonathan, enters in a transport of delirium.

‘ Chi sete voi ?....Chi d ’aura aperta e pura
Qui favello ?....Questa? é caligin densa ;
Tenebre sono : ombra di morte....Oh ! mira ;
Pui mi t’ accosta ; il vedi? il sol d’intorno
Cinta ha di sangue ghirlanda funesta.
Odi tu canto di sinistri angelli?
Lugubre un pianto sull’aere si spande
Che mi percuote, e a lagrimar mi sforza
Ma che? voi pur, voi pur piangete? ’

‘ Who, who are ye? Who speaks of pure air here ?
This ! ’tis a thick impenetrable gloom ;
A land of darkness, and the shades of death.
Ah see ! draw nearer me,—dost thou behold?
A fatal wreath of blood surrounds the sun,—
Heard’st thou the death-notes of ill-omened birds?
With loud laments the vocal air resounds,
That smite my ears, compelling me to weep ;
But what, do ye weep also ? — ’

The psalmist of Israel takes his harp, and endeavors to soothe the frenzy of the King. There is much solemnity and poetic beauty in these hymns.

I.

‘ O tu, che eterno, onnipossente, immenso,
Siedi sovrano d’ogni creata cosa ;
Tu per cui tratto son dal nulla, e penso,
E la mia mente a te salir pur osa ;
Tu, che se il guardo inchini, apresi il denso
Abisso, e via non serba a te nascosa ;
Se il capo accenni, trema lo universo ;
Se il braccio innalzi, ogni empio ecco è disperso ;

II.

‘ Già sulle ratte folgoranti piume
 Di Cherubin ben mille un dì scendesti ;
 E del tuo caldo irresistibil nume
 Il condottiero d’Israello empiesti :
 Di perenne facondia a lui tu fiume,
 Tu brando, e senno, e scudo a lui tu festi ;
 Deh ! di tua fiamma tanto un raggio solo
 Nubi-fendente or manda a noi dal polo.’

I.

‘ Omnipotent, eternal, infinite,*
 Thou who dost govern each created thing ;
 Thou, who from nothing mad’st me by thy might,
 Blest with a soul that dares to thee take wing ;
 Thou who canst pierce the abyss of endless night,
 And all its mysteries into day-light bring ;
 The universe doth tremble at thy nod,
 And sinners prostrate fall at the out-stretched arm of God.

II.

‘ Oft on the gorgeous blazing wings ere now
 Of thousand cherubim wert thou revealed ;
 Oft did thy pure divinity endow
 Thy people’s shepherd in the martial field.
 To him a stream of eloquence wert thou ;
 Thou wert his sword, his wisdom, and his shield.
 From thy bright throne, oh God ! bestow one ray
 To cleave the gathering clouds that intercept the day.’

Saul is roused from his lethargy by the voice of David, and again the harp is struck, and in lofty notes, the Psalmist recounts the victories and glorious deeds of the King. He listens, like the war-horse aroused by the sound of the trumpet, but the excitement is momentary, and the old monarch asks for words of peace. Then David strikes more gentle chords. He sings of the champion, reposing on his laurels when the toils of the day are over,—of his children, who sympathize with his feelings,—of his daughter, whose gentle hand unfits

‘ His crested helm and sword.’

He paints a scene of tranquil domestic happiness. The King

* There is some resemblance between these verses, and the hymn of Adam in Lord Byron’s *Cain*, commencing :—

‘ God, the Eternal ! Infinite, All Wise,’ &c.

listens, while the notes fall like balm upon his wounded spirit ; —then, in a changeful mood, he calls again for songs of war. David describes Saul as aroused from his slumbers, like the terrible lion of the forest ; the hostile squadrons retreat before the arms of Israel. But while he sings the glory of Saul, he represents himself as following in the same warlike path ; and Saul is again roused to fury.

‘ *Saul.* Chi, chi si vanta ? Havvi altra spada in campo,
Che questa mia, ch’o snudo ? Empio è, si uccidà,
Pera, chila sprezzo.

Mical. T ’arresta : oh cielo !....

Gion. Padre ! che fai ?....

Dav. Misero re !

Mic. Deh ! fuggi....

A gran pena il teniam, deh ! fuggi, o sposo.’

‘ *Saul.* Who, who thus boasts ? Is there, except my sword,
Which I unsheathe, another in the camp ?
He’s a blasphemer, let him perish, he
Who dares defy it.

Mic. Ah forbear ; Oh Heaven !

Jon. Father, what wouldst thou do ?

Dav. Unhappy king !

Mic. Ah fly !.... Ah fly ! With difficulty we
From violence restrain him.’

In the fourth act, the frenzy of Saul has passed away, but his fury against David continues. Abner accuses David of having absented himself at the hour of battle, and leads into the presence of Saul Achimilech, whom he has found in the camp. Saul, infuriated against the Levites, commands the high-priest to render an account of his boldness in having granted protection to David. The proud Achimilech threatens the King in his turn,—boldly defends David,—bids Saul tremble,—in a prophetic fury describes a vision of the angel of death, hovering with fiery wings over the guilty monarch, and foretells the downfall of Saul’s house as even now at hand. The spirit of the King is irritated into madness. He commands Abner to change the arrangements of battle made by the impious David, to drag the high-priest from his presence, and to slay him. He orders his *vengeance* to be sent to Nob, there to destroy the whole sacerdotal race,—priests and prophets,—their wives, children and household. In vain his children interpose to stay his hand. After swearing vengeance

against David, he commands them from his presence, and exclaims in mournful soliloquy,—

‘ Sol, con me stesso, io sto.—Di me soltanto,
(Misero re !) di me solo io non tremo.’

‘ I to myself am left.—Myself alone,
(Unhappy king!) myself I dread not.’

In the fifth act, Michal is leading forth her fugitive husband from his concealment. The shades of night environ them. She beseeches him to fly. David at first refuses. The holy spirit which inspires him has revealed to the chosen one of Heaven, that

‘ For Israel and its king
The terrible day is come.’

But when he hears that holy blood has been shed in the camp of Saul, he consents, but implores the princess to let him wander forth alone ; represents to her the hardships to which one bred in softness would be exposed in the wilderness,—and entreats her to remain and console her unhappy father. They part in mutual sorrow, and Michal is left to mourn alone the sad condition of all whom she loves most. She hears the sound of war, and groans proceeding from her father’s tent. The delirium of Saul in the next act is sublime. He enters, without recognising his daughter, but beholding the dread shade of Samuel,—of Achimilech,—of the slaughtered priests. Rivers of blood environ him. On either shore are piled heaps of recent corpses. In the midst of his terror and remorse, he prays that his innocent children may be spared ; but he reads no pity in the eyes of Samuel,—they are orbs of blood,—his hands are fire, and his nostrils breathe flames. Then, from amidst the spectral throng, issues the cry,—

‘ We are the children of Achimilech,
I am Achimilech. Die, monarch, die.’

Suddenly, the spectres seem to vanish from his sight,—and the din of battle is heard approaching. The sound of the trumpets grows louder, and Abner rushes in with a handful of fugitive soldiers. The Philistines are in the camp of the Israelites, and the sons of Saul are slain. As if the retributory wrath of heaven were appeased, the evil spirit of Saul seems to leave him. He commends his daughter to the care of Ab-

ner, but for himself, he will die like a king. The Princess refuses to abandon her father. He prays her not to compel him to weep. He forces her to go, and remains alone. His last soliloquy is noble.

‘ Oh figli miei ! Fui padre,
Eccoti solo, o re ; non un mi resta
Dei tanti amici, o servi tuoi. Sei paga,
D’inesorabil Dio terribil via ?
Ma, tu mi resti, o brando ! all ’ultim ’uopo
Fido ministro, or vieni. Eccogià gli urli
Dell insolente vincitor ; sul ciglio,
Già lor fiaccole ardenti balenarmi
Veggio, e le spade a mille....Empia Filiste !
Me troverai, ma almen da re, qui.....morto.’

‘ Oh my children !
I was a father. See thyself alone,
Oh king ; of thy so many friends and servants,
Not one remains. Inexorable God !
Is thy retributory wrath appeased ?
But thou remainest to me, oh sword ! now come
My faithful servant in extremity.
Hark ! hark ! the howlings of the insolent victors ;
The lightning of their burning torches glares
Before my eyes already, and I see
Their swords by thousands....Impious Philistine !
Thou shalt find me, but like a king, here....dead.’

As he falls transfixed on his own sword, the victorious Philistines rush in with flaming torches and bloody swords. While with loud cries they surround Saul, the curtain falls.

There is much of the spirit of Shakspeare in the conception of this noble drama. The madness of Saul is treated with the same masterly hand,—with that fearful truth and nature which distinguish those scenes, in which the great English dramatist has described the wreck of the human mind. Yet the tragedies of Alfieri produced no lasting effect. He revived the conventional rules of the French system, and invested them with a splendor which was only dissipated, when his sceptre passed into feebler hands, and the real barrenness of his dramatic theory became evident.

The most celebrated tragedy, which has been written in the school of Alfieri, is the *Aristodemo* of Vincenzio Monti. Great expectations were excited by its publication, but the

genius of the author seemed to have been nearly exhausted in this splendid production,—or rather, his talents and his principles abandoned him together. Notwithstanding the efforts of Giovanni and Ippolito Pindemonte, and their partial success, the Italian drama gradually declined, and it became evident, that a total change in the prevailing ideas with regard to the dramatic system, was necessary.

The learned criticisms of German writers, and the spirit of inquiry diffused throughout Italy, have at length effected a revolution in the dramatic literature of that country, likely to produce the most important results. Alessandro Manzoni, who stands at the head of the new school, seems to have been well aware of the fact, that in any departure from established rules, the bolder the project is, the greater necessity there exists for prudence in its execution.

He has been extremely cautious, and almost timid, lest in endeavoring to attain liberty, he should incur the reproach of having degenerated into license. He has simplified the plots of his dramas with a care which is almost superfluous, even whilst he enlarges his limits of space and time. He has also entirely rejected the union of tragic and comic in his dramas, a combination which has, however, been defended by German critics; and has thus prudently avoided an alliance at all times hazardous, and one which is too apt to destroy in our minds the effect of the deeper feelings which tragedy is intended to produce.

Before venturing upon the violation of these canons of taste, Manzoni has thought it necessary to explain the principles by which he has been actuated. From his clear and masterly exposition of these principles, he has contrived to throw a new light upon a question, which seemed to admit of no novelty in discussion. He reduces the inconveniences resulting from the classic system, to four principal heads. First,—that in the choice which an author must make between the events represented before the spectator, and those which are only made known to the audience in recital, he must be regulated by an arbitrary measurement of time, and not by the nature of the events themselves and their relation with the action. Secondly,—a greater number of facts are brought together in the space fixed by arbitrary rule, than probability permits. Thirdly,—notwithstanding this, many very poetic materials, furnished by history, must be omitted. Fourthly,—causes purely

inventive must be substituted for the causes which really determined the action represented. He has also proved, that the strict observance of the unities of place and time has arisen from a misconception of ancient authorities ; the first, from the circumstance that Greek tragedies represented an action which happened in one place alone, and from an idea that the Greek theatre must remain a model of dramatic perfection,—the second, from a passage in Aristotle, simply taking notice that such was the general practice of the Greek theatre ; but by no means laying it down as a precept. It is well known, that the chief reason adduced by the French critics for their strict adherence to unity of place is, that since the spectator remains stationary, it must appear to him a violation of probability, that different parts of the action, which he sees represented, should happen in different places. This reasoning is founded upon a false supposition ; viz.,—that the spectator is there as forming part of the action ; whereas, he is in fact a *mind* contemplating it. Probability arises from the connexion which the different parts of the action have with each other ; not from any relation which they have with the actual condition of the spectator. Thus we hear two persons confidentially disclosing a secret on the stage, while the theatre is crowded with spectators.

But, since the French themselves have admitted the propriety of extending the action to a space of four and twenty hours, on account of the difficulty of finding a subject which can be compressed within such narrow limits, the question becomes reduced to a mere matter of calculation, as to the probable stretch of the human imagination. Yet while the author denies that the precise time can be calculated and laid down by arbitrary rule, he admits that the more space and time the action includes, the more likely it is to lose the important character of unity of subject, which is so essential to probability. He is also of opinion, that if the facts composing an historical event are so scattered, and are at such a distance as to have but a feeble connexion with each other, the poet should abandon that subject, as unfitted for tragedy.

In treating the question in a moral point of view, he has compared the tragedies of Othello and Zaire, the master-pieces of two different systems, and the subject of which is fundamentally the same. In Othello, we behold the growing strength of one predominant passion, so distorting the mental vision,

that the most simple circumstances appear ‘confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ.’ We see the power exercised by cold-blooded villany over a fierce but generous nature ;—terminating in murder, remorse, and suicide. The moral lesson is terrible and affecting.

But, in *Zaire*, it was necessary, in order that the poet should not deviate from the prescribed path, that we should behold Orosmane, a generous and humane monarch, in the morning filled with confidence and affection for *Zaire*, and in the evening of the same day, with a credulity which would have been improbable even in the hot-headed Moor, believe himself betrayed, and stab her to the heart. No time was given slowly to distil into the soul of Orosmane, drop by drop, the poison, which conducted Othello to vengeance. The error must be produced by the false interpretation of a fact. A letter addressed to *Zaire* falls into the hands of Orosmane, and leads him instantaneously to the conviction of her treachery. Here is no moral lesson. We are merely shown, that accidents may occur in the course of our lives, which may lead a virtuous man to become criminal and wretched.

By means of another important innovation, Manzoni has in fact approached nearer to the classical models of antiquity, than any preceding dramatist. He has introduced, by way of experiment, a lyrical chorus, and to it we are indebted for two of the most splendid specimens of lyric poetry, which modern Italy has produced.

The subjects selected by Manzoni in the two dramas, which render his name so justly celebrated, are of a nature so coldly political, that nothing short of the masterly manner in which the author has treated them, could have invested his characters with the interest which they cannot fail to excite. The *Conte di Carmagnola* is founded on an event, which occurred in Venice in the fifteenth century. The hero, a soldier of fortune, who had risen from the ranks to the post of generalissimo of the armies of Filippo Visconti, duke of Milan, having, by his popularity amongst the soldiers, excited the jealousy of his master, was deprived of his command, and took refuge amongst the Venetians, by whom he was welcomed with distinction. The Florentines were at this time engaged in a war with Milan, and had requested the assistance of the Venetian Republic. After much deliberation, Carmagnola is chosen by the Venetian senate to command their forces. An important victory is

gained by the troops under his command over the Milanese, at Macclodio; but the Venetian senate begin to conceive suspicions of the brave adventurer, on account of his persisting in giving liberty to his prisoners, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the commissioners, a proceeding, however, in strict accordance with the universal practice of the *Condottieri* of those times. His ruin is determined upon,—he is decoyed to Venice, and when in the power of the senate, is condemned to death. Upon this simple basis, the author has raised a superstructure of five acts. The chief interest is excited by the unnatural collision between the proud and fiery soldier of fortune, and the cold, calculating Venetian senate; between the wise and worldly politicians, and their noble but imprudent victim. Perhaps the most effective passages in the drama, are the soliloquy of Carmagnola after his election, the spirited scene in the second act, which introduces us to the camp of the Duke of Milan, near Macclodio, and the chorus which terminates the second act, and which describes, in all the pomp of beautiful language and striking imagery, the destructive effects of war.

There is little doubt, however, that the effect produced by this magnificent ode, would have been still stronger, had not the author suddenly passed from a tragic action, where the personages are represented as present, to a lyric song, expressive only of his own imaginative feelings. To this error he has been led by Schlegel's definition of a Greek chorus. 'The chorus must be regarded as the personification of the moral thoughts inspired by the action,—as the organ of the sentiments of the poet, who speaks in the name of humanity. The Greeks wished that in every drama the chorus should represent first the national genius, and then the defender of the cause of humanity; the chorus was in short the ideal spectator,' &c. But the Greek chorus was in fact composed of real personages, and expressed the sentiments of the people; and had the author brought forward this chorus in action, had he for example supposed it to be sung by some of the spectators of the battle,—by the trembling maidens, or the aged men, who from the neighboring heights beheld the approaching destruction, and communicated to each other their hopes and fears, it is impossible but that the effect upon the audience must have been of the most thrilling nature; and he would have proved that the ancient chorus may be combined advantageously with the modern tragic system.

It is evident, that if the author has deviated from Grecian rules as to the space and time of his action, he has been more than necessarily severe in the barren simplicity of his outline ; and that, in taking this his first flight, he moves with cautious wing, and still feels the imaginary weight of the chains which bound him ; totally differing in this respect from the German reformers, who boldly rushed to the opposite extreme, and only learned moderation by experience.

But in the *Adelchi*, the genius of Manzoni has taken a higher flight. The subject is the downfall of the last national kings of the Lombards, Desiderius and Adelchis, before the victorious arms of Charlemagne. Ermengarda, the wife of Charlemagne, the sister of Adelchis and daughter of Desiderius, has been divorced by her husband, from motives of policy, and the play opens with the return of the heart-broken princess to the fair land of her fathers. The first scene displays to us the political and domestic motives of the war, which is about to ensue. Desiderius, a brave and proud barbarian, unfolds to his son his projects of vengeance, for the insult which he has received in the person of his daughter,—his determination of placing the two orphan nephews of Charlemagne, who had been entrusted to the care of the Lombard princes by their mother Geberga, on the throne of the usurper,—his intention of taking the princes to Rome, and of compelling Pope Adrian to anoint them kings. Adelchis, who dreads a contest with Rome, endeavors, but in vain, to dissuade his father from this rash project. The entrance of the unfortunate Ermengarda interrupts their dispute, and the tender and delicate consolations which she receives from her father and brother are described in a scene of exquisite tenderness and beauty. Desiderius speaks of vengeance, and the princess prays for peace and solitude. He sternly asks her if she still loves Charlemagne, and she entreats him not to force her to search her joyless heart ; but to permit her, as a last favor, to retire from court, and to seek for shelter within the walls of the convent, of which her sister Ausberga is Abbess. Desiderius grants this request, and when the princess has retired, the arrival of an ambassador from Charlemagne is announced. With a laconic haughtiness, which befits the messenger of the great monarch, he demands, in the name of his master, that Desiderius shall forthwith resign the territories given by Pepin to the Pope. The result of the conference is an immediate

declaration of war ; and the conclusion of the first act reveals the treachery which, in the heart of the capital, is preparing the fall of the Lombard king.

At the opening of the second act, the two armies are drawn up in array against each other, but separated by the Alps, apparently an impassable barrier. The action is suspended. The French, hopeless and dispirited, are on the point of being led back by Charlemagne into France, when the arrival of an Italian priest, Martin, the deacon of Ravenna, suddenly revives their drooping spirits. He has crossed these mountains, by the desire of Pope Leo, and appears before Charlemagne, like a good angel sent from above, to guide him on his way. The description of his passage over the Alps is one of the most sublime to be met with in modern poetry. The scene is brought before us with a vigor and clearness of detail, which prevent the mind from wandering for a moment from the subject. We follow the footsteps of the narrator with almost breathless anxiety. We almost hear the boiling of the torrent,—the scream of the falcon,—the flap of the eagle's wing as he starts from his lonely eyrie ; and feel the fierceness of the noon-day sun, causing ' the frequent crackle of the pine-tree tops,' as it smites them ; and share in his triumphant joy when he describes his first view of the valley, and of the tents of Charlemagne. The emperor demands how this road was made known to him, how hidden from the enemy. He replies :

‘ Dio gli accecò, Dio mi guidò. Del campo

Inosservati uscii ; l'ormi ripresi.

Poco inanzi calcate ; indi alla destra

Pregai vero Aquilone, e abbandonando

I battuti sentieri, in una angusta

Oscura valle m'internai : ma quanto

Più il passo proceda, tanto allo sguardo

Più spaziosa ella si fea. Qui scorsi

Greggie erranti e tuguri : era cotesta

L'ultima stanza de'mortali : entrai

Presso un pastor, chiesi l'ospizio, e sovra

Lanose pelli riposai la notte.

Sorto all'aurora, al buon pastor la via

Addimandai di Francia. Oltre que'monti

Sono altri monti, ei disse, ed altri ancora ;

E lontano lontan Francia : ma via

Non havvi ; e mille son quei monti, e tutti

Erti, nudi, tremendi, inhabitati

Se non da spirti, ed uom mortal giammai
Non li varcò.—Le vie di Dio son molte,
Piu assai di quelle del mortal, risposi ;
E Dio mi manda.—E Dio ti scorga, ei disse :
Indi tra i pani che teneva in serbo
Tanti pigliò di quanti un pellegrino
Puote andar carco ; e in rude sacco avvolti
Ne gravò le mie spalle : il guiderdone
Io gli pregai dal cielo ; e in via mi posi.
Guinse in capo alla valle, un giogo asceti,
E in Dio fidando, lo varcai. Qui nulla
Traccia d'uomo apparia ; solo foreste
D'intatti abeti, ignoti fiumi, e valli
Senza sentier : tutto tacea ; null'altro
Che i miei passi io sentiva, e ad ora ad ora
Lo scrosciare dei torrenti, o l'improvviso
Stridir del falco, o l'aquila dall'erto
Nido spiccata in sul mattin rombando
Passar sovra il mio capo, o sul meriggio
Tocchi dal sole, crepitar del pino
Silvestre i con. Andai così tre giorni ;
E sotto l'alte piante, o nei burroni
Posai tre notti. Era mio guida il sole ;
Io sorgeva con esso e il suo viaggio
Seguia, rivolto al suo tramonto. Incerto
Pur del cammino io già ; di valle in valle
Trapassando mai sempre ; o se talvolta
D'accessibil pendio sorgermi innanzi,
Vedeva un giogo, e n'attingea la cima,
Altre più eccelse cime, innanzi, intorno
Sovrastavanmi ancora ; altre di neve,
Da sommo ad imo biancheggianti, e quasi,
Ripidi, acuti padiglioni al suolo
Confiti ; altre ferrigne, erette a guisa
Di mura, insuperabili. Cadeva
Il terzo sol, quando gran un monte io scersi,
Che sovra gli altri ergea la fronte ; ed era
Tutto una verde china ; e la sua vetta,
Coronata di piante. A quella parte
Tosto il passo io rivolsi. Era la costa,
Oriental di questo monte istesso ;
A cui di contro al sol cadente il tuo,
Campo s'appoggia, o sire ! In su le falde,
Mi colsero le tenebre : le secche,
Lubriche spoglie degli abeti, ond'era,
Il suol grenuto, mi fur letto, e sponda

Gli antichissimi trouchi. Mia ridente
 Speranza all' alba risvegliommi ; e pieno
 Di novello vigor la costa ascesi.
 Appena il sommo ne toccai, l'orecchio
 Mi percosse un ronzio che di lontano
 Pareva venir, cupo, incessante : io stetti,
 Ed immoto ascoltai. Non eran l' acque,
 Rotte fra i sassi in giù ; non era il vento,
 Che investia le foreste, e sibilando,
 D'ima in altra scorrea ; ma veramente,
 Un romor di viventi, un indistinto
 Suon di favelle e d' opre e di pedate,
 Brulicanti da lungi, un agitarsi
 D'uomini immenso. Il cor balzommi, e il passo
 Accelerai. Su questa, o re, che a noi
 Sembra di qui lunga ed acuta cima,
 Fendere il ciel, quasi affilata scure,
 Giace un' ampia pianura e d' erbe è folta
 Non mai calcate in pria. Presi di quella,
 Il piu breve tragitto ; ad ogni istante,
 Si fea il romor più presso : divorai
 L' estrema via ; guinse sull' orlo, il guardo
 Lanciai giù nella valle, e vidi....oh ! vidi,
 Le tende d' Israello, i sospirati,
 Padiglion di Giacobbe : al suol prostrato,
 Dio ringraziai, li benedissi, e scesi.*

' God blinded *them* : God guided *me*. Unseen
 Of all, I left the camp, again I took
 The path I late had trodden ; to the right,
 And to the north declining, I forsook
 The beaten track, and to a narrow vale
 Gloomy and deep plunged down. But as my step
 Moved on and on, the valley wider spread
 And wider still around me. Wandering flocks
 And cottages I spied, and one that seemed
 The last of human dwellings. Entering there,
 I sought the shepherd's shelter, and upon
 His couch of skins I laid me down to sleep.
 At morn, uprising, of my host I asked
 The way that led to France. " Beyond these hills
 Are other hills," said he, " and others still ;
 And far, far hence, is France. No way leads thither,

* In this, and the next extract, we have availed ourselves of Foscolo's translation.

A thousand mountains lie between,—and all
Bleak, barren, terrible, untenanted
Of aught save spirits,—and by human step
Untrodden." "Many are the ways of God,
Tho' few the ways of mortals." I replied ;
"And God hath sent me." "God then be thy guide,"
Said he ; then from his scanty store of loaves
He chose as many as the wanderer
Might bear, wrapt them in his rude scrip, and laid them
Upon my shoulder. And I prayed that Heaven
Would bless him for the boon, and took my way.

I reached the valley's mouth. I climbed the steep
And confident in God I crossed it. Here
No track of man appeared, but forests old
Of heavy firs, rivers unknown, and vales
Untravelled ; silent all : no sound was heard
Save of my footsteps, and from time to time
The boiling of the torrent, or the shrill
And sudden falcon's scream, the eagle's wheel
Starting, at morning, from his nest, and soaring
In solemn circles round me, or at noon
The frequent crackle of the pine-tree tops
Smote by the sun. Three days I journeyed thus,
Three nights, beneath the thickets and the caves
I rested. By the sun my steps I guided,
I rose with him, my eyes pursued his course
Until he sank into his western home.
Doubtful I travelled on, from vale to vale
Still crossing without end ; and when at times
I reached some pathless peak that rose before me,
A loftier range of hills, before, behind,
High overshadowing towered, some snowy shrouded
From top to base, rising like pointed tents
Pitched in the ground ; some iron-bound, upreared
Like walls erect and insurmountable.

The third day's sun was setting, when I spied
One loftier than the rest, whose side was all
One green descent, whose summit forest-crowned.
Thither I turned. It was the eastern side
Of that same hill, along whose western slope
Thy tents, O sire ! are pitched. Night overtook me
Upon its side. The dry and slippery bark
Of the hoar pines, that strewed the grass, I made
My bed, their immemorial tusky trunks
My mossy pillow. Gay and smiling hope

Awoke me with the dawn of day, and full
Of renovated strength I climbed the hill.
Scarce had I reached the summit, when a hum,
As from a distance, smote upon mine ear,
Deep and unceasing. All at once I paused
And listened, motionless. 'Twas not the rush
Of broken mountain torrents, nor the wind
Sweeping the forest, and with piping breath
Wandering among the branches; 'twas indeed
The noise of living things, the mingled murmur
Of converse, and of labor, and of footsteps
Echoing afar the muster and the motion
Of countless multitudes. My heart beat high,
My step grew quicker. By yon pointed peak
That seems with sharpened edge to cleave the sky,
When viewed from hence, an ample plain extends
Whose grass is yet untrodden. Thence I took
The nearest path,—with every step the sound
Came nearer still,—I seemed to swallow up
The road,—I gained the bank,—I shot my glance
Down to the valley,—and I saw, I saw
The tents of Israel,—the long-sought pavilions
Of Jacob; prostrate on the ground I fell,
I thanked my God, I blessed them and descended.'

Then Charlemagne exclaims—

'Impious is he, who does not here behold
The right hand of the Highest!'

The army are roused from despondency, and speedy preparations are made for attempting the passage of the Alps.

In the third act, the scene changes to the camp of the Lombards, where Adelchis is expressing to Anfrido, his faithful shield-bearer, his fears lest Charlemagne, unable to effect a passage over the Alps, should escape their vengeance,—and that his father, disappointed in this project, will turn his arms against the Pope. Desiderius enters, and already, in anticipation of the event, salutes his son as the conqueror of Rome. Suddenly, loud cries announce the arrival of the French. The terrified Lombards are seen flying in every direction. In vain the brave princes attempt to rally the fugitives. Fear has taken possession of them, and treachery has done its work. In the next scene, Charlemagne receives the homage of the traitors who have betrayed their country to the foe.

Then, in a solitary wood, surrounded by a few trembling adherents, we find the unfortunate king of the Lombards. He is joined by his son, and though well aware that all is lost, they resolve that the victory shall be dearly purchased by the foe. The act concludes with a lyrical chorus, which, being sung by the old inhabitants of the country, is full of animation and effect.

The next scene is one of unmingled tenderness and beauty. In the secluded convent of St. Salvador, in Brescia, Ermengarda, one of the most beautiful creations of a poet's fancy, is sinking to her last rest, the hopes of Heaven before her eyes, yet her woman's heart filled with love for her ungrateful husband. No poet of ancient days could have dreamed of an Ermengarda, or embodied the beautiful shades in which her character is drawn. The contrast also is peculiarly impressive between the perfect seclusion of the holy retreat, and the storms of war, which are raging without. It has been observed that the scene greatly resembles that of the death of Queen Catharine in Shakspeare, but the mixture of tenderness and dignity in the character of the Lombard princess,—her love,—her simple purity,—render her infinitely more interesting than the English Queen. She is brought into the convent-garden, supported by her women, and attended by her sister.

'Ermengarda. Lay me beneath this linden.

[*She seats herself.*]

O ! how sweet

This April ray ! how lovingly it lies
Upon the budding leaves ! Ah ! now I know
Why they, who full of years feel life flit by,
So love to look upon the sun.'

The maidens retire, and she reveals to Ausberga her last wishes. She prays her to tell her father and her much-loved Adelchis, how, on the brink of life, the memory of the day when 'to the trembling one they stretched a strong and pitying arm,' was still sweet and grateful to her heart. Then, in a more hesitating, but yet more earnest tone, she bequeaths her last forgiveness to the conqueror. Ausberga solemnly promises that her request shall be sacred.

'Ermengarda.

Beloved !

One more, and I have done....This mortal frame

On which, while living, thou hast lavished oft

Thy tender cares, oh ! let it not displease thee
 To tend, when dead, and lay it in the tomb.
 This ring thou see'st on my left hand,—let that
 Go with me to the grave, for it was given me,
 Beside the altar, before God. And modest
 Let mine urn be. Dust we are all, and I,
 Of what have I to boast ? Yet let it bear
 The ensigns of a queen ; a sacred bond
 Made me a queen, and what God gave, thou know'st
 Man cannot take away. So let my death,
 Even as my life attest it.'

She supposes that Charlemagne may yet claim her cold remains as due to the royal tomb ; since the dead are often more powerful than the living. But Ausberga imprudently reveals to the unfortunate princess, that Charlemagne is yet more guilty towards her, and that his union with her rival, Ildegarda, has already taken place. Unable to bear this last sad blow, the princess swoons, and when she awakens, her imagination impressed with the falsehood of her husband, she imagines, in her delirium, that she beholds her rival usurping his affections, and she herself despised and driven from him with insult.

' *Ermengarda*, [*in delirium*.] Guards!
 Drive off that woman ! Ha ! Do ye not see
 How boldly she advances, and attempts
 To take my husband's hand ?

Ausberga. Awake ! Oh God !
 Be yet thyself ; and speak not thus ; dismiss
 These phantoms, and invoke His holy name.

Ermengarda. I pray thee, Charles ! Let her not do so,
 But flash on her the lightning of thine eyes,
 Then will she swiftly flee ; since, even I,
 Myself,—thy wife,—whose thoughts were ever pure,
 Yet never could behold them without trembling.
 Oh God ! What do I see ? Thou smilest on her ?
 Ah no ! But cease the cruel jest ;—I love it not,—
 It tortures me,—Oh Charles, thou canst now,
 In truth thou canst, if so it pleases thee,
 Kill me with grief, but where would be thy glory ?
 Thyself, one day,—thyself wouldst grieve for it.
 Tremendous is my love,—thou know'st it not,—
 I never dared to show it,—thou wert mine,—
 Secure in joy and love, these lips dared not
 Reveal the secret rapture of my soul.

In mercy drive her off! Behold! I fear her
 Like a serpent; her eyes are killing me.
 I am alone, and weak; say,—art not thou
 My only friend? If I was once thine own,
 If ever thou didst love me,—force me not
 Thus to implore that mocking crowd,—Oh God!
 He flies into her arms! I die!.....’

Sometimes she tries to believe that the whole is but a dream.

‘*Ermengarda.* If it were a dream! And that the dawn
 Should make it vanish! And I should waken
 Worn out and faint with weeping; and that Charles
 Should ask me of the cause; then smilingly
 Should chide me for my little faith!

(*She relapses into her lethargy.*)

Ausberga. O Queen
 Of Heaven, take pity on her!

First Sister. Ah! see
 Her face grows tranquil, and her troubled breast,
 No longer beats beneath my hand.

Ausberga. Oh sister!
 Ermengarda! Ermengarda!

Ermengarda. Who calls? [thee

Ausberga. Look at me; I am Ausberga; and around
 Thy maidens stand, the pious sisterhood,
 Who pray for peace to thee.

Ermengarda. May Heaven bless them!
 Yes! these indeed are eyes of peace and friendship.—
 I am awakened from a mournful dream.

Ausberga. Unfortunate! Exhaustion, not repose,
 Brings thee this troubled peace.

Ermengarda. Alas! ’tis true—
 My breath has gone—support me, my beloved,—
 And you,—kind maidens,—lead me to my couch,
 ’Tis the last time that I shall trouble you.
 But all will be remembered there,—above.
 Now let me die in peace,—and speak of God;
 I feel Him very near me.

CHORUS.

Scattered her silken tresses
 Upon her weary breast,
 Feeble her pulse,—her pallid brow
 With death’s cold dews imprest,
 The holy Lady lies,
 Her sad and trembling eyes
 Looking to Heaven for rest.

No more the voice of wail !
Let sounds of prayer arise !
How gently close her soft blue eyes !
While a light hand descends,
And o'er her clay-cold brow extends
Death's last and tranquil veil.

To Heaven's will resigned,
All earthly feelings banish,—
From thy pure and holy mind
Let care and sorrow vanish.—
At the Eternal Throne
Thou, blest and pious one !
A bright reward for troubles here shalt find.'

The mind is painfully brought back to the scenes of treachery, which occupy the remainder of the fourth act. In the last act, the success of Charlemagne is complete, and an interview takes place between him and the old dethroned monarch. Instead of the gallant Charlemagne, surrounded by his paladins, invested in all the warm coloring of chivalry,—brave, generous and romantic, as we imagine him,—we have a cold, calculating, prudent sovereign, for whose character we have much respect, but with whom we have no sympathy. The Italian poet could not otherwise represent his country's enslaver. He views him in the stern page of history ; not in the bright hues of romance. Nevertheless, the mind is awakened too rudely from an agreeable illusion. Desiderius implores the life of his son, and the Charlemagne of Manzoni coldly rejects his prayer. A messenger arrives with the intelligence that Verona is taken, and that Adelchis is mortally wounded. A gleam of pity shoots athwart the stern heart of the conqueror, and he commands that the dying hero shall be brought into his tent. The meeting between the father and the son is in a high degree affecting. With his death the drama closes.

Its faults may be briefly enumerated,—the poverty of the plot,—the remote and uninteresting nature of the story,—the outrage of all poetical justice in the *denouement*,—the slender links by which the fate of Ermengarda is connected with the main action,—the perversion of an historical fact in the death of Adelchis, who was not killed until some years afterwards,—and the character of Adelchis himself, the pure and perfect abstraction of every human virtue. But though these errors

may strike the critical reader, it is scarcely possible to perceive them upon the first perusal of this noble tragedy,—the happiest medium which has yet been found, between the irregularity of Shakspeare and the frigid simplicity of the French school. Kindred genius has nobly appreciated the merits of the author. Goethe himself, from his own golden sunset, generously hailed the appearance of this new star in the literary horizon. Nor is it probable that the genius of Manzoni has reached its destined height. Encouraged by the applause of the learned, and sufficiently candid to profit by their criticisms, there scarce seem any limits to the excellence which he may hope to attain. As a lyric poet he is unrivalled,—and his ode, entitled ‘*Il cinque Maggio*,’ the Anniversary of Napoleon’s death, and which has already been translated both into English and German, is the most splendid tribute which has yet been paid to the Conqueror’s memory.

We have left ourselves brief space to speak of the contemporary poets of Italy. The interest with which misfortune has invested the name of Pellico, and the untoward circumstances under which many of his tragedies have been written, would almost of themselves serve to disarm a critical judgment. Yet though far inferior in energy to the author of *Adelchi*, there is a sweetness and purity of feeling in the works of Pellico, which are very attractive, even if insufficient for the higher walks of tragedy. Of his *Francesca da Rimini* so much has been said, that all analysis of it is superfluous. Yet we question whether the whole tragedy has caused as many tears to flow, as the few lines of Dante, which simply relate the story. Perhaps it is in human nature to be more affected, when a stern poet like Dante condescends to embody a tale of tenderness, than when we peruse whole pages on the same theme by a feebler pen. We feel grateful, as for the strong man’s gentleness,—more touching by contrast with his power.

The works of Pellico seem to resemble his character,—gentle, amiable, enthusiastic, and with a tenderness of disposition almost bordering upon effeminacy. While his style is always pure and elegant, it is wanting in energy and compression; and this fault is the more obvious, from the circumstance of his keeping the Greek school so much in view, without possessing the power and grandeur which can alone reconcile us to its simplicity. Noble simplicity is imposing. Simplicity allied with softness, is apt to degenerate into insipidity.

The *Giovanni da Procida* of Giovan-Battista Niccolini is distinguished from the other works of the same author by the introduction of a chorus ; an innovation to which he has been probably led by the example of Manzoni. This chorus, which is sung by the poets and maidens of Sicily, is the most affecting part of the tragedy. The story is founded upon the historical fact of the Sicilian Vespers : but while the plot is of the most horrible description, the scenes are so cold and abstracted, with so little warmth and nature infused into the characters, that, with the exception of some noble passages, and occasionally striking dialogue, there is little to awaken our sympathy, or arouse our feelings. The whole bears the impress of genius, but of genius fettered by system, and dreading criticism. This tragedy furnishes another proof, that something more than the mere adoption of a national subject is wanting to inspire the modern dramatist. The *Polyxene* of the same author is infinitely superior to the play in question.

Yet there is now no country where the dramatic art is likely to flourish with greater vigor, than in Italy ; and the highest merit is due to the author, who has made so hazardous and successful a stand against prejudices hallowed by time. When we consider the importance of the Drama as a vehicle of public instruction, and the effect which it may produce on the vehement minds of an Italian audience, we can scarcely attach too much importance to the subject. ‘The dramatic art,’ says Manzoni himself, in his preface to the *Carmagnola*, ‘is to be found amongst all civilized nations ; by some it is regarded as a powerful means of amelioration, by others, as a powerful means of corruption,—by none, as a matter of indifference.’

And where is the heart so cold, that it will not rejoice at the literary glory of Italy,—the sceptre which Heaven has bestowed, and which human force cannot wrest away ? Let her no longer wreathe her chains with flowers, but bind the brows of her sons with unfading laurel, and, like Greece in by-gone ages, force the usurper to bend before the power of genius,—and retain the Empire of the Mind, even though the Empire of the World is no longer hers.